POLICY STATEMENT

RESIDENTIAL CEILING HEIGHTS

The Michigan Residential Code (MRC) 2000 requires a minimum ceiling height in dwellings of 7 feet 0 inches. This includes habitable rooms as well as hallways, corridors, bathrooms, toilet rooms, laundry rooms and basements.

There are numerous dwellings throughout the City with rooms as well as entire floors being used as dwelling space which do not comply with this ceiling height requirement. During rental property inspections these dwelling units face the prospect of being vacated since correction of this violation is often not possible nor financially feasible.

It is not the Code’s intent to deny affordable housing to people or to deny revenue potential to landlords. In fact, Appendix J of the MRC states that the purpose of these provisions is "to encourage the continued use or reuse of legally existing buildings and structures." At the same time, this Office has the responsibility of helping to ensure that safe housing is being provided to residents of the City. This policy is therefore being implemented with the purpose of balancing the City’s need for affordable housing with the requirement to comply with the Code.

The Building Official is given authority by Section R104.10 of the MRC to grant administrative modifications when practical difficulties are encountered in complying with the Code. When granted, an administrative modification would allow specifically identified spaces to continue to be used as habitable living space provided certain minimum requirements are met.

The procedure is dependent upon the degree of compliance which currently exists in the dwelling unit. The policy is consequently divided into three stages as described below. The first stage is essentially a "standing" administrative modification that allows field inspectors to grant exceptions in the field. The second stage is a true administrative modification granted by the building official for specific conditions at a specific location. The third stage requires a decision by the Building Board of Appeals.
Stage One  Approval by Inspector

Building Inspectors and Code Compliance Officers are hereby authorized to grant exceptions in the field when ceiling heights less than 7 feet 0 inches are encountered. The following conditions must exist or be completed as appropriate.

1. Ceiling height shall be not less than 6 feet 8 inches and the ceiling must be at least 3 feet 6 inches in width at that height across the length of the room.

2. Bedrooms must have at least one window which has a minimum five square feet of rough opening and provides a minimum clear opening not less than 24 inches high nor less than 20 inches in width.

3. Smoke detectors shall be installed in each bedroom where either of the two previous minimum conditions exists. Such detectors shall receive their power from the building wiring (110 volts) and shall be equipped with a battery back up.

Stage Two  Administrative Modification

1. This stage will be invoked when approval cannot be granted in the field under Stage One.

2. The ceiling height and room width shall achieve 88% of the required area as determined by calculations following procedures defined in Attachment A.

3. Each bedroom shall have at least one window which has a minimum five square feet of rough opening and provides a minimum clear opening not less than 24 inches high nor less than 20 inches in width. If the window must be replaced, it must meet current Building Code requirements for opening size and minimum dimensions.

4. Smoke detectors shall be installed in each bedroom of the dwelling in conformance with Section R317 of the MRC. Each detector shall receive power from the building wiring and shall be equipped with a battery back up. The detectors shall be interconnected.

Stage Three  Board of Appeals

Those spaces which do not meet the requirements in Stage One or Stage Two shall be vacated, or they shall be referred to the Building Board of Appeals for disposition.

Jan, 1993
Revised – Feb, 2000
Revised – Feb, 2002
REQUIRED CEILING HEIGHT CODE AND ADMIN MODIFICATION CROSS SECTION AREAS

Area A: 45.5 sq ft per Michigan Residential Code (100%)
Area B: 43.75 sq ft per Stage One of policy (96%)

Minimum area to be approved by Administrative Modification is 88% of the area required by Code (40 sq ft).

ACTUAL CEILING HEIGHT CALCULATION METHOD FOR CROSS SECTION AREA

\[ \% = \frac{([H \times W] + 0.5 \times (H + K) \times (7 - W))}{45.5} \]
\[ K = K1 + \frac{((H - K1) \times W1)}{W2} \]
\[ W = \text{Ceiling width at highest point} \]
\[ H = \text{Ceiling height at highest point} \]
\[ K = \text{Calculated knee wall height at 7' 0" width} \]
\[ K1 = \text{Actual knee wall height} \]
\[ W1 = \frac{1}{2} \text{ additional width beyond 7' 0"} \]
\[ W2 = \frac{1}{2} (\text{room width} - W) \]

February, 2002